

THE CLAIMS:

1. (Canceled)
2. (Currently Amended) A surgical instrument assembly for treating female urinary incontinence comprising:
 - a mesh for implanting into the lower abdomen of a female patient to provide support to the urethra and comprising a first and a second mesh coupling means at first and second ends of the mesh, respectively, wherein the first and second mesh coupling means are each fixedly secured at a first end thereof to the respective first and second ends of the mesh, and each have a recess therein at a second end,
 - a curved needle element defining in part a curved shaft having a distal end and a proximal end, ~~the distal end having a needle coupling means for attaching to the first and second mesh coupling means,~~
 - wherein the recesses in the second ends of the first and second coupling means are dimensioned to receive therein and form a tight interference fit with the distal end of the needle to thereby enable the needle element to be removably coupled to the mesh.
3. (New) An assembly according to claim 2, wherein the first and second coupling means further comprises a protrusion extending inwardly into the respective recesses, and wherein the distal end of the needle element has a recess therein, wherein, when the distal end of the needle is received within the recess in the first or second coupling means, the protrusion engages said needle element recess.
4. (New) A surgical instrument assembly comprising:
 - a mesh for implantation into a patient;
 - at least first and second coupling elements at first and second peripheral end portions of said mesh, said first and second coupling elements each being fixedly secured to the mesh at a first end, and each having a recess therein at a second end; and
 - a curved needle element defining in part a curved shaft and having a distal end and a proximal end,

wherein the recesses in the second ends of each of the first and second coupling elements are dimensioned to receive therein and form a tight interference fit with the distal end of the needle element to thereby enable the needle element to be removably coupled to the mesh.